

CHAPTER 10

Volunteer Program

10-1. Purpose. This chapter establishes guidance on accepting and managing the services of volunteers.

10-2. Background.

a. The Chief of Engineers may accept the services of volunteers and provide for their incidental expenses to carry out any activity of the Army Corps of Engineers except policy making or law/regulatory enforcement as authorized under PL 98-63. The primary objective is to utilize volunteer services providing some value to the Corps in a manner mutually beneficial to the volunteer and the public interest.

b. Volunteers may carry out many activities for the Corps of Engineers. Voluntary service may supplement existing staff in carrying out duties, and may also include work that would not otherwise be accomplished because of funding or personnel limitations.

10-3. Guidance.

a. A successful volunteer program requires a step-by-step approach to assess Corps needs, develop a plan to accomplish those needs, and evaluate program success. The program should also match Corps needs to the volunteer talents available. The major steps in this process are:

(1) Assess overall needs. Define the tasks that need to be done at the individual project or office as identified in the Operations Management Plan (OMP).

(2) Evaluate costs and benefits. This program is not “free”. It will require staff time, administrative support, and supplies for tasks undertaken. Evaluate risks associated with volunteer service against benefits. Regulate the size of the program to match individual organizational capability.

(3) Refine position descriptions. The project volunteer coordinator will develop position descriptions including a brief statement of the volunteer’s role, duties, minimum qualifications, and desired experience. Existing information and the NRM Gateway may provide examples.

(4) Recruit and select. Advertise the volunteer program through the USACE Volunteer Clearinghouse (www.corpslakes.us/volunteer), which will also list the positions on the Volunteer.gov website (www.volunteer.gov), public service announcements, news releases, personal contact and brochures. Screen all applicants and identify the talents that are available. Match the volunteer applicants with the tasks identified, conduct an interview, check references, complete background screening as necessary, and finish the acceptance process including agreement.

(5) Complete paperwork and process to obtain Volunteer Logical Access Credential (VOLAC) cards for volunteers requiring use of Corps computers and networks.

(6) Provide orientation and training. Provide initial orientation to the USACE and site missions and follow-up training commensurate with the type of job, length of proposed service and the requirements for safety in accordance with EM 385-1-1. Orientation is valuable to volunteers to show how their job impacts the overall missions and goals. Volunteers should be introduced to other Corps staff to ensure a smooth transition into the work environment.

(7) Provide supervision. Identify supervisory channels for the volunteer and clearly describe the work to be accomplished. Supervisors should assign tasks and follow up on assignment completion.

(8) Keep records. The supervisor/coordinator will minimally maintain records of the hours worked, tasks performed, training provided and incidental expenses reimbursed for each volunteer.

(9) Develop a volunteer plan. A volunteer plan is a synopsis of the information resulting from paragraphs 10-3a (1) through (8) above. Such a plan should be included as an appendix to the project Operational Management Plan (OMP). Samples of district and project volunteer plans can be found on the Natural Resources Management (NRM) Gateway Volunteer Program page.

b. Volunteer Coordinators shall practice due diligence in screening volunteer candidates to assure the safety and security of USACE staff, contractors, and of the public. Background/security checks shall be completed as needed for certain volunteer positions with high public contact such as campground hosts, gate attendants, visitor center hosts, interpreters, and other similar positions where the volunteer works independently of Corps personnel, or requires access to a Corps networked computer, or accesses government files and records. Volunteer Coordinators shall work with their District Security Office to obtain background checks and ensure proper procedures are followed. Background checks shall be paid for out of project operating funds or District Security Office funds.

(1) Individuals who volunteer for more than 120 calendar days in a year shall be subject to a background check.

(2) All information received as a result of a background check will be held in confidence and handled according to Privacy Act regulation. Required components include, at a minimum:

(a) Social security verification to help eliminate the possibility of false names/information.

(b) Address trace to verify volunteer's current address and to determine jurisdiction in which to conduct the background screening.

(c) State or county criminal history checks to capture all misdemeanor and felony convictions within the jurisdictions identified in the address trace.

(d) Sex offender registry to search all 50 states for known sex offenders.

(3) The existence of a criminal conviction does not automatically disqualify an applicant from being a volunteer, unless the conviction is for a violent crime, crime against person, or crime involving the use of a weapon. The Security Office shall make the decision whether the potential volunteer clears the background check for volunteer service. Volunteer Coordinators will provide the potential duties and responsibilities to be assigned.

c. Volunteers may be authorized to operate government computers connected to Department of Defense (DOD) networks, subject to all applicable Federal regulations, local policies, ACE-IT, and AR 25-2 requirements. Volunteers requiring computer access must be issued a Volunteer Logical Access Credential (VOLAC) card.

(1) Volunteers must meet the following eligibility requirements to obtain a VOLAC card:

(a) Require frequent access to a DoD network to perform their volunteer duties.

(b) Be a U.S. citizen

(c) Be registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) through the Trusted Associate Sponsorship System (TASS)

(d) Receive a favorable National Agency Check with Inquiries (NACI). A credential may be issued upon submission of the NACI and upon favorable completion of the FBI National Criminal History Check (fingerprint check). The volunteer coordinator will work with CPAC or the Security Office in requesting support from the Personnel Security Investigation - Center of Excellence (PSI-CoE) for submission of the proper investigation to meet this requirement. Fingerprints may be obtained by the Security Office or by local law enforcement officials on the SF 87 and submitted to the Security Office. Volunteers who only use stand alone government computers that are not connected to a Department of Defense network do not require a VOLAC.

(e) Be eligible for a DoD sponsored unclassified network account through Army Knowledge Online (AKO).

(f) Agree to be photographed and have fingerprints taken and stored in the volunteer's DEERS record.

(2) District offices must establish a TASS VOLAC program infrastructure by completing the following steps:

(a) Submit a request for approval to the HQUSACE TASS SPOC to establish a Trusted Agent Security Manager (TASM) in the District Office and a TASS Site ID. The TASM will need to complete a training course to become certified.

(b) Once approved, the TASM will appoint Trusted Agents (TA) for each of the project offices within the District. The TAs will need to complete a training course to become certified.

(3) Once a TASS VOLAC Program infrastructure has been established within a District, the following procedures must be followed to issue VOLAC cards to eligible volunteers:

(a) The project volunteer coordinator (sponsor) will submit a request for a VOLAC card to a VOLAC Trusted Agent (TA), which will typically be the Operations Project Manager, Natural Resource Manager, or Natural Resource Specialist/Park Ranger at the project.

(b) The VOLAC TA will review the request and create a volunteer record in TASS, then notify the volunteer coordinator to complete the request in TASS.

(c) The volunteer coordinator will complete the application and return it to the TA for verification and approval in TASS.

(d) The volunteer will be notified to report to the servicing DEERS/RAPIDS ID Card issuance facility for VOLAC issuance.

(e) Volunteer Access Cards expire after 180 days, but may be renewed automatically.

(f) At the end of a volunteer's service, the VOLAC must be returned to the Volunteer Sponsor to a RAPIDS ID Card issuance facility for disposition, and access revoked in the TASS system.

d. Volunteer agreements may be accepted and authorized by any Corps employee designated by the Operations Project Manager, Natural Resources Manager, District or Division Volunteer Program Manager.

e. Voluntary service may be accepted from individuals or from members of organized groups. Volunteers will be recruited and service accepted without regard to race, creed, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, or handicap.

f. Volunteers will be provided a work environment which is equivalent to that provided for Corps personnel performing similar duties. Volunteers shall not be used in work assignments in which Corps personnel would receive hazardous duty pay.

(1) The same safety and security training and briefings provided to Corps personnel in a given circumstance will also be provided to volunteers. This should include the review of an "Activity Hazard Analysis". Examples of AHAs can be found on the Natural Resources Management Gateway.

(2) Injuries to volunteers will be reported in the same manner as those involving Corps personnel. The activity may also be required to report all hours of volunteer work (reported as USACE personnel work-hours) for accident statistical analysis purposes in accordance with District protocol.

g. Voluntary service is to be carried out in conformance with Federal, State and local laws and standards regarding the employment of minors.

h. The agreement for volunteer services may be terminated at any time by the volunteer coordinator or the volunteer. Volunteer coordinators will safeguard against the appearance of favoritism or discriminatory actions.

i. A large event which is sponsored and coordinated by multiple organizations and attracts large numbers of participants may be considered a volunteer activity when the overall event is coordinated by the Corps and the requirements of this guidance are met.

10-4. Special Considerations.

a. Federal Employees Compensation Act. Volunteers are entitled to first aid and medical treatment for on-the-job injuries, as well as hospital care when necessary. When travel for receiving medical care is necessary, transportation may be furnished or travel expenses reimbursed. If death results from an on-the-job injury, burial and funeral expenses may be paid. Burial and funeral payment, however, as well as other possible compensations are regulated by the Office of Worker Compensation Programs. Volunteers do not receive compensation for lost wages. (Note: This paragraph does not apply to any prisoner work program. Such programs would be covered by a separate formal agreement and other regulations and statutes.)

b. Federal Tort Claims Act. This Act provides a means whereby damages may be awarded as a result of claims against the Corps for injury or loss of property or personal injury or death caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of any employee of the Corps. Such damages could be awarded if a private person would be liable to the claimant in accordance with the law of the place where the act or omission occurred.

10-5. Incidental Expenses.

a. PL 98-63 grants the Corps authority to provide for the incidental expenses of volunteers. Reimbursement of incidental expenses is not to be understood as salary. Many volunteers do not want or need reimbursement for their out-of-pocket expenses; others could not volunteer without some financial assistance. Reimbursement should be handled on a case-by-case basis.

b. The volunteer coordinator and volunteers should enter into volunteer agreements with the understanding that reimbursement is not mandatory.

c. Volunteers may be reimbursed for actual out-of-pocket expenses they incur in performing voluntary service when approved in advance and noted on the volunteer agreement.

d. Long distance travel expenses may be reimbursed in cases where it can be shown that the services of the volunteer will be of exceptional value to the Corps. It is recommended, when possible, that volunteers needing routine reimbursement for local mileage driven in personal vehicle be added to CEFMS and local travel vouchers be processed as with Corps employees. Volunteers receiving reimbursement for travel may sign up for direct deposit in the same manner as employees.

e. Standard Form 1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business. Claims for reimbursement of a volunteer's incidental expenses should be submitted on Standard

Form 1164, and, payment made by Visa check or check from Defense Finance & Accounting Services in Millington. The District Resource Management Office should be consulted, as procedures vary between locations.

10-6. Value and Forms.

a. For the purpose of determining the value of volunteer services, the USACE has agreed with the other federal agencies to use the Independent Sector's hourly rate as set by the Bureau of Labor Statistics each spring. This rate will be used to calculate the value of service per hour regardless of age or activity, no cost of living or other adjustments of any kind will be made to this rate. The value of service is calculated automatically in OMBIL by entering the number of volunteer hours. The rate is posted on the Volunteer Program FAQs page of the NRM Gateway.

b. OF 301, "Volunteer Application for Natural Resources Agencies". This form shall be provided to all people who request information about the volunteer program. It is designed to gather pertinent information on a potential volunteer's background and areas of interest and skills. It can be used to screen applicants, to develop a file of potential volunteers or to refer volunteers to other projects or agencies. Optional Form 301 can be obtained from the NRM Gateway Volunteer Program Policy and Procedures page.

c. OF 301 A, "Volunteer Agreement for Natural Resources Agencies" shall be used for Individual/Group Voluntary Services at Corps civil works projects regardless of mission. This form is the official document that legally enrolls an individual in the program and provides him or her with federal protection in case of injury or tort claim. It must be completed and signed prior to commencement of work by both the volunteer or organized group representative and the accepting official for all volunteers, even for work projects of only a few hours duration. This form is to be used when dealing with individual volunteers or sponsored groups. A list, containing the name, address and signature of each group member who will be participating must be attached. Also a complete, detailed description of the duties, conditions, and responsibilities should be attached to this form. This is important in case questions arise on whether the volunteer was acting within the scope of his/her assigned responsibilities. The document can be modified at any time by mutual consent, but it must accurately reflect the duties of the volunteers at all times. The acceptance/termination line at the bottom of the form serves two purposes. It provides the accepting official with a means of officially terminating an agreement, if appropriate, and it provides a legal record of when an agreement was terminated in case of a law suit or injury claim. A copy of the agreement along with any revisions or amendments should be given to the volunteer for his/her records. The original should be retained by the accepting official for a three-year period. The inactive file is to protect against possible law suit or injury claim. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian complete the Parental consent. This requirement also applies to volunteers of organized groups. However, if the group leader has already obtained a signed parental release on their own organization's form, this can be used in place of the parental consent portion of OF 301 A.

d. ENG Form 4882-R, Volunteer Service Record. This form may be used to record information regarding the service of individual volunteers and to compile information for OMBIL. Other forms or electronic means that include hours contributed, dates worked, and tasks accomplished may be used. This information may be needed to establish the validity of a Tort claim or Worker's Compensation claim that arise from the volunteer's service.

e. Standard Form 87, Fingerprint Card. This form is used when conducting background checks for volunteers who require access to Federally-controlled computer systems.

f. ENG 6030, U-PASS and Network Access Control. This form is used to control network and Automated Information Systems access privileges on Corps of Engineers' systems. It establishes UserIDs, e-mail accounts, system access, and network privileges.

g. Reproducible copies of all required forms are available on the Natural Resources Management Gateway

h. Volunteer data shall be entered annually in the Recreation module of OMBIL. Volunteer hours associated with a partnership agreement will also be entered in the Partnership Annual Update.